



STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

J.B. VAN HOLLEN
ATTORNEY GENERAL

Raymond P. Taffora
Deputy Attorney General

114 East, State Capitol
P.O. Box 7857
Madison, WI 53707-7857
608/266-1221
TTY 1-800-947-3529

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Senator Mark Miller, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Finance
317-E, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Representative Mark Pocan, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Finance
309-E, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Members of the Joint Committee on Finance

Dear Senator Miller, Representative Pocan and Members of the Joint Committee on Finance:

Public safety is the *first* priority of government. Public safety protects our lives, liberties and property from those who violate the law. Not only does law enforcement and public safety protect individual liberty, but without it, other government efforts cannot succeed.

That is why I was encouraged when Governor Doyle began his budget address by stating that the budget must first protect what's important to Wisconsin and included public safety in that list. Unfortunately, the Governor's proposed budget fails to protect law enforcement's existing ability to protect public safety and it takes dramatic steps backwards.

I am very concerned that the following elements of the Governor's budget proposal compromises protection of the public because it:

- **Authorizes the early release of felons by the Department of Corrections.** This will lead to more drug dealers, repeat drunk drivers, burglars, and other offenders walking the street. By taking the "truth" out of truth-in-sentencing law, and empowering unelected state officials to release such persons, this budget proposal takes sentencing decisions out of the hands of locally elected district attorneys and judges and retroactively extinguishes the voice of crime victims.
- **Authorizes the early termination of extended supervision.** Not only will felons serve less time, felons will not be supervised for as long. Extended supervision plays a significant role in keeping offenders straight and protecting the public.

- **Eliminates supervision for some misdemeanants.** While we should be debating whether to *increase* supervision options for misdemeanor drunk drivers to keep them from repeating, the Governor is proposing to eliminate certain supervision requirements. Supervision can keep misdemeanor offenders from escalating their illegal activity and becoming repeat offenders – and chronic residents of the State's correctional facilities.
- **Reduces GPS monitoring of sex offenders** so that information is sent from the devices to the department once a day instead of continuously in real time.
- **Expands the opportunities for criminals to expunge their records.**
- **Cuts the District Attorney budget by 6.5%, while increasing spending by 7.9% in the first year of the biennium.** At the same time, a 2007 Legislative Audit Bureau report found the state was 117 prosecutors short—a condition that has not changed in the interim.
- **Cuts shared revenue by 1% while making no allowance for impacts on local law enforcement or fire protection.**
- **Eliminates the front license plate requirement.** The front license plate is often essential to the proper identification of criminal offenders by law enforcement.
- **Imposes additional costs on law enforcement (and taxpayers)** by charging agencies to use the State Patrol Accident Reconstruction services, services that help investigate not only drunk driving accidents and other motor vehicle crashes, but assists in the investigation of homicides and other crime.
- **Cuts law enforcement training for local and state officers.**
- **Cuts state support for multi-jurisdictional drug investigation units and other narcotics enforcement.**
- **Authorizes use of existing surcharge funds for state support of county victim assistance programs on the one hand while cutting other funding sources on the other.**
- **Reduces existing Department of Justice funds and empowers the Secretary of Administration to impose additional lapses on law enforcement activities within the DOJ without approval by the Legislature.**
- **Fails to authorize Crime Alert Network, a proposal funded exclusively through private voluntary participation that would connect law enforcement with business and individuals to assist in the investigation of crimes including kidnapping and pharmaceutical theft.**
- **Fails to supplement narcotics enforcement agents lost due to recent federal cuts, despite the infusion of new federal aid.**

- **Eliminates aid to local law enforcement to purchase equipment used to record custodial interrogations.**
- **Imposes on local law enforcement unfunded mandate to change record keeping with regard to every stop, to transmit that information to DOJ (requiring new IT resources), and to require DOJ (without additional IT or analyst funding) to capture and analyze the data for the purposes for studying racial disparities issues.**

Thankfully, the legislature can still cure these oversights. While I recognize the state's current fiscal situation, now is not the time to turn away from our core priorities. We should not balance the budget on the back of public safety, nor by passing down costs to local law enforcement, nor by imposing additional burdens on understaffed district attorneys offices.

I look forward to appearing before you tomorrow and also speaking with you individually about these matters in more detail as the budget process moves forward.

Sincerely,



J.B. Van Hollen
Attorney General

JBV:pss

cc: Governor James E. Doyle, Jr.
Michael Morgan, Secretary of Administration
Senator Russ Decker, Senate Majority Leader
Senator Fred Risser, President of the Senate
Senator Scott Fitzgerald, Senate Minority Leader
Representative Michael Sheridan, Assembly Speaker
Representative Thomas Nelson, Assembly Majority Leader
Representative Jeff Fitzgerald, Assembly Minority Leader
All State Legislators (via e-mail)
All Sheriffs (via e-mail)
All District Attorneys (via e-mail)
All Chiefs of Police (via e-mail)